

Learning to Hunt

Hosting a hunting-
based outdoor skills
event in your
community



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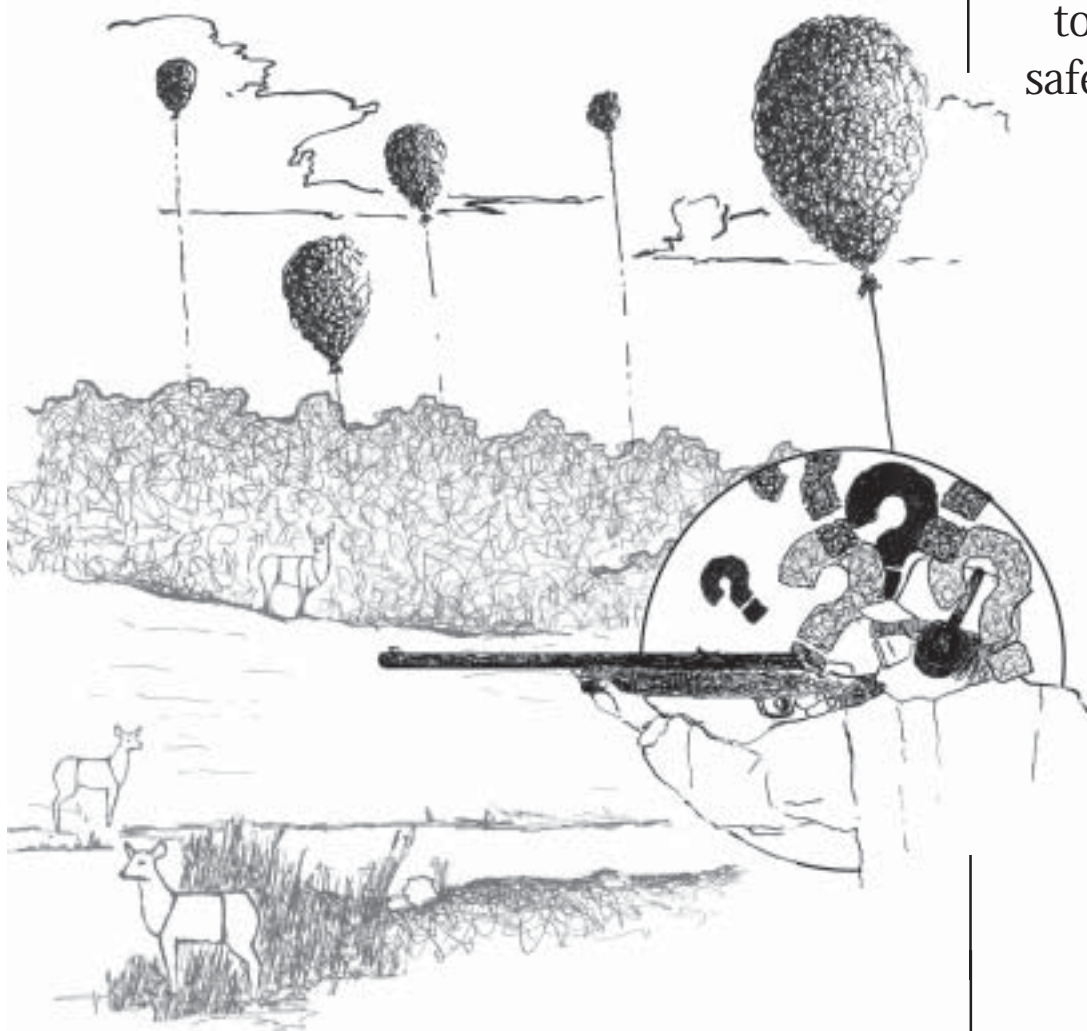
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Game Alley

Walking the hunting
obstacle course

Participants are
faced with a
number of
hunting situations
in which they
must decide how
to respond in a
safe, responsible
and ethical
manner.



Station 12

Game Alley

Learning to Hunt

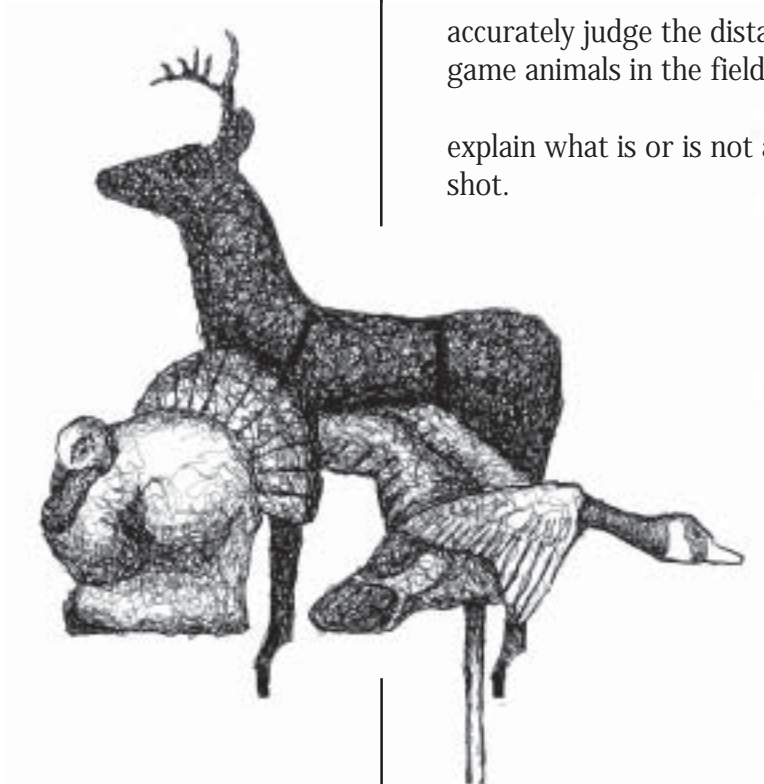
Objectives

Participants shall:

- demonstrate how to safely cross a fence when hunting alone or with a partner.
- demonstrate how to safely cross a log lying across a stream or ravine while hunting.
- demonstrate how to load and unload a firearm safely in a group.
- list 6 or more statements in the **Hunter's Code of Ethics** and demonstrate their personal code of ethics by picking up litter found on the course.
- accurately judge the distance to game animals in the field.
- explain what is or is not a safe shot.

Equipment

- Fence or 4 steel fence posts and 2 strands of fence wire
- 12 or more pieces of litter, including spent shotgun shells, soda cans, sandwich bags, paper lunch sacks, and cigarette packages
- Several one dollar bills
- Log placed over a ravine, or a sturdy plank placed upon cement blocks
- Assorted deer, turkey, duck and goose decoys or cardboard silhouettes
- 2 dozen paper plates
- Large ball of lightweight string
- Marking pens
- Clipboards, paper and pencils
- "Dummy" ammunition and several shotguns
- 3 to 6 helium-filled balloons in two different sizes
- Copy of **Hunter's Code of Ethics** per participant found on page 94.



Station Setup

Locate a fence, or erect a temporary one from fence posts and wire if necessary. Place a large log across a ravine, or a sturdy plank on cinder blocks. In one area, throw litter on the ground. Roll up one or more dollar bills and insert them in spent shell casings that you cast onto the ground. Make copies of **Hunter's Code of Ethics** to distribute to all participants.

Set up deer and turkey decoys in an area you designate "game alley." Place deer decoys on top of a hill, in front of heavy brush, and near a pond edge. Place turkey decoys closer to the group. Put a big gobbler decoy in front of a group of three hens. Put a jake with head erect standing behind the hens, and put another jake, head erect, well to the side of the group of hens. Hang duck and goose silhouettes from tree limbs at various heights. Place duck decoys on the ground at varying distances. Be sure to place the decoys so there are both good and bad shots.

Along a wooded lane, tie paper plates to tree branches at various distances from the trail to indicate game animals. On the front of the plates, write the name of the type of animal. On the back, print the distance between the plate and the path, in yards. Take care to tie the

paper plates with two pieces of string to avoid the plates twirling around in the breeze.

In another area, tie the helium balloons at heights of 40, 50 and 60 yards.



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Activity

Procedure

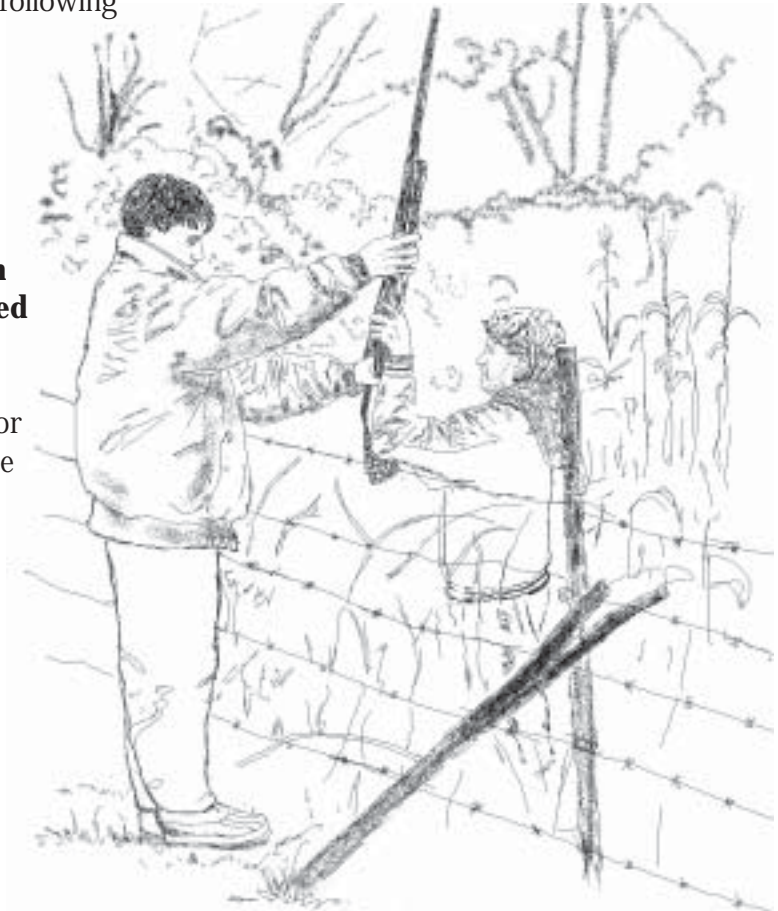
Tell participants that they will experience an obstacle course that will help them learn some of the safety rules for hunting. The first experience will be crossing a fence.

Choose one person to be the hunting group leader. It is the group leader's responsibility to control the hunting group while loading and unloading, proceeding through the terrain, and crossing any obstacles. If there are more than two participants in your group, have the leader shout out the commands. The leader should call aloud the following commands as appropriate:

Safety On
Unload
Load
Actions Open
Actions Closed

Use dummy ammunition for this part of the activity.

Take participants to the fence and demonstrate how to cross over it safely. Demonstrate using two volunteers. Both should unload their guns and leave their actions open. The first volunteer crosses over the fence unarmed, then reaches back to take the two, unloaded guns from the other volunteer. The second volunteer then crawls under the fence and retrieves his or her gun from the first person.



Demonstrate how to cross a fence when hunting alone. The hunter should unload the gun, place a hat or cap underneath the bottom-most wire, place the gun muzzle inside the cap where no debris can fall in. Hunters should always point muzzle away from themselves. They should then climb over or under the fence, unarmed, and retrieve and reload the gun on the other side.



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Next, take participants to the log placed over a ravine or a plank placed upon cement blocks. Explain that there will be times they may have to cross a log laying across a small creek or ravine. Ask them to demonstrate an appropriate way to safely cross this obstacle, both as individuals and with a hunting partner.

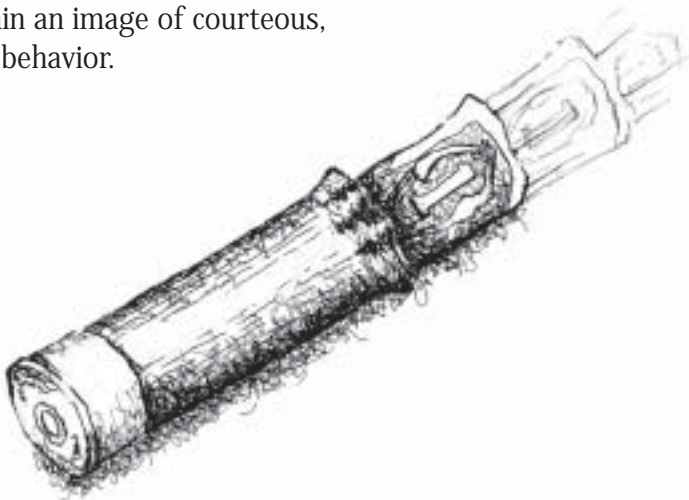
Stress the importance of always unloading a gun before attempting to cross an obstacle that may result in tripping or slipping.





Walk participants past the area where you deliberately scattered the litter. Watch to see if any of them pick it up. If they do, tell them to look inside their pieces of litter for a surprise reward – the dollar bill. Tell participants how important it is for hunters to maintain an image of courteous, caring behavior.

Hand out copies of **Hunter's Code of Ethics** and review each point. Now point out that in the situation they just experienced, one way to convey their personal code of ethics is to always leave the area hunted in cleaner, better condition than they found it.



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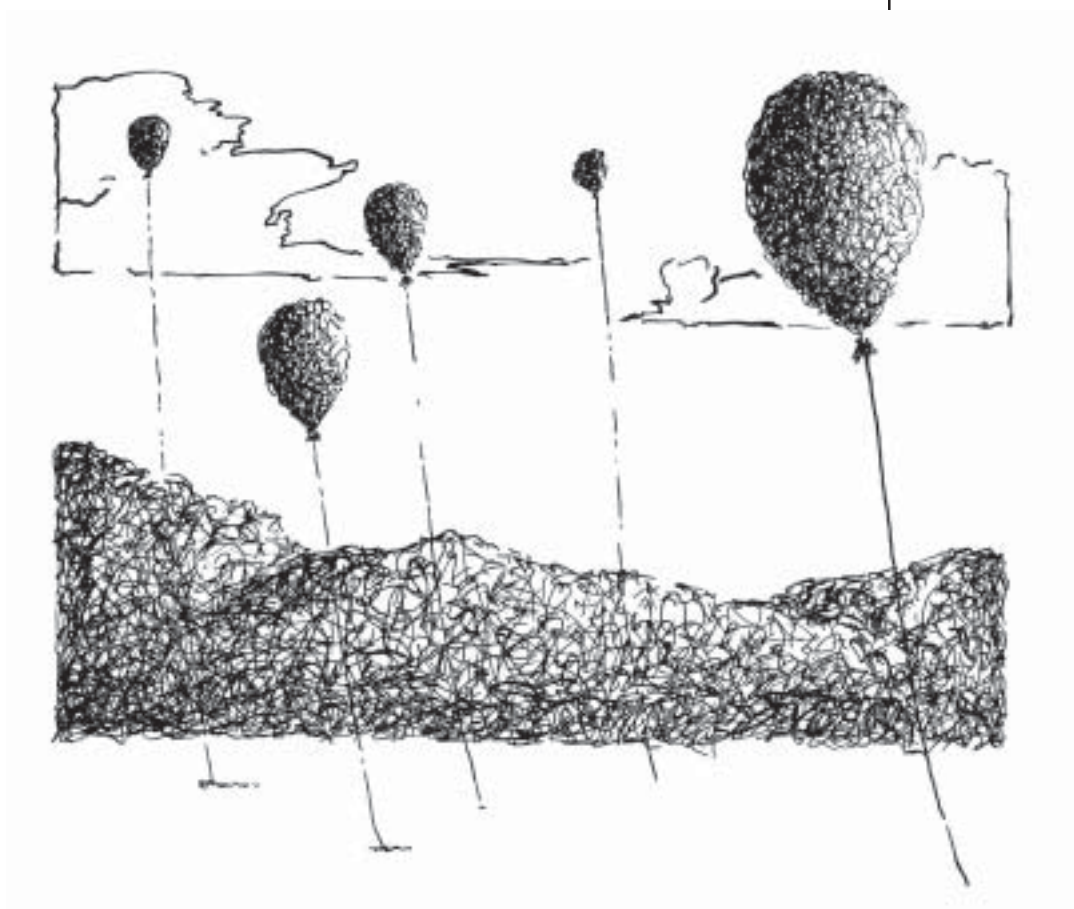
Next, take participants to the lane where plates are hanging from the trees. Give participants a clipboard, paper and pencil, and have them write down an estimate of how far the first plate is from the trail. Then ask them to walk up to the plate, turn it over and record the correct yardage next to their answer. Continue with the remaining plates. Participants' estimates should improve as they travel through the course.

Tell participants that if they misjudge distance while waterfowl hunting and shoot at birds that are not within the best firing range for their gun or ammunition, they will likely miss or, worse, cripple the bird. Before they decide to shoot, they must know that the bird is in range. Shooting at birds that are too far away from them is called "skybusting," which is considered unethical. Although skybusting occurs frequently, few people will admit to it. Participants who learn to judge distance will make it easier for their hunting partners to enjoy the hunt. It will also keep the participants from crippling waterfowl that are not in effective killing range, and keep them from wasting our resource.

Now, take your group to the spot where you have placed different sized helium balloons floating at heights of 40, 50 and 60 yards. The different sizes can represent ducks and geese. Ask participants to estimate how far the balloons are from the spot where the string is anchored. Allow sufficient time for the group to suggest some answers, then tell them the balloons are suspended on 40, 50 and 60 yards of string. The 50-yard balloon represents a bird at the outer limit of the effective range for most waterfowling. Have them take turns pointing a shotgun at these "birds" suspended in the air. Point out that as the wind raises and lowers the balloons, they are always 40, 50, or 60 yards away, although they can look different depending on whether they are in front of you or directly above you.

Finally, take participants to the area where you have the deer, turkey and duck decoys set up. For each decoy, ask participants if they would shoot or not shoot, and have them explain why. Give participants a chance to respond to each decoy station. Then have participants estimate the distances to the decoys. Provide feedback about how close they were to the correct yardage.





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References

Inspired by Scott Sager's "Game Day," West Bend Hunter Education Program, West Bend, Wisconsin.

